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Elections to fill vacancies in subsidiary organs and other elections: election of members of the Human Rights Council

Note verbale dated 8 January 2020 from the Permanent Mission of Cuba to the United Nations addressed to the President of the General Assembly

The Permanent Mission of the Republic of Cuba to the United Nations presents its compliments to the President of the General Assembly and, with reference to the candidature of Cuba to the Human Rights Council for the period 2021–2023, at the elections to be held in New York in October and November 2020 during the seventy-fifth session of the Assembly, has the honour to transmit herewith the voluntary pledges and commitments of Cuba in accordance with Assembly resolution [60/251](#) (see annex).

These voluntary pledges and commitments confirm the priority that Cuba attaches to international cooperation for the promotion and protection of all human rights within the United Nations framework and, in particular, its commitment to strengthening the work of the Human Rights Council.

In this regard, the Permanent Mission of Cuba has the honour to request the Office of the President of the General Assembly to circulate the present note and its annex as a document of the Assembly, under agenda item 119 (c).

* [A/75/50](#).



Annex to the note verbale dated 8 January 2020 from the Permanent Mission of Cuba to the United Nations addressed to the President of the General Assembly

Candidature of Cuba to the Human Rights Council, 2021–2023

Voluntary pledges and commitments pursuant to General Assembly resolution [60/251](#)

The Government of the Republic of Cuba attaches the greatest importance to international cooperation for the promotion and protection of all human rights within the United Nations and, to that end, aspires to be elected as a member of the Human Rights Council for the period 2021–2023.

Cuba participated actively and constructively in the negotiations that led to the establishment of the Human Rights Council and in its institution-building process. Cuba, both in its national capacity and as Chair of the Non-Aligned Movement at that time, tried to ensure that the new body would serve as a forum for the genuine promotion of constructive and respectful dialogue and international cooperation in the field of human rights.

Cuba remains committed to promoting consideration of the just historical demands of the peoples of the South and the rest of the world on such issues as the effective realization of the rights to development, education and health; combating racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance; and ensuring full respect for the principles of universality, indivisibility, objectivity, non-politicization and non-selectivity in strengthening cooperation on human rights issues.

Cuba reaffirms its readiness to continue working to achieve the shared goal of enabling all individuals and peoples throughout the world to enjoy all human rights, on the basis of respect for the Charter of the United Nations, the internationally agreed human rights instruments and the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action. Cuba reiterates its commitment to international cooperation in the promotion and protection of human rights.

In May 2006, Cuba was elected as a founding member of the Human Rights Council for the period 2006–2009. The country was also a member of the Council during the 2009–2012, 2014–2016 and 2017–2019 periods.

Cuban women and men have made significant progress in the enjoyment of all their human rights. Whether in the area of economic, social and cultural rights, the field of civil and political rights, or in the realization of so-called third-generation or solidarity rights, the Cuban people can show the world their achievements, with profound modesty, but also full satisfaction and pride.

If we had to mention only one – the most important attribute and right that the Cuban people have achieved – we would have to refer, without any doubt, to the full exercise of their right to self-determination, facing the grave obstacles and threats resulting from the unilateral policy of hostility, acts of aggression and the embargo imposed on Cuba since 1959.

The important achievements of Cuba in such areas as health, education, scientific and technical research, culture and sports are known internationally. However, what has been hidden or distorted is the fact that all this has been possible precisely because the Cuban people are the masters of their political fate and the country's resources, exercise the fullest power and control over the country's life, and

participate actively in the effective system of democracy that they designed and approved in a universal plebiscite.

The drafting, adoption and ratification by the people of the new constitution of the Republic was a genuine and exceptional demonstration of the exercise of power by the people and of the participatory and democratic nature of the Cuban political system. The new constitution was ratified by popular referendum on 24 February 2019, with 86.85 per cent of voters voting in favour. Prior to the referendum, a vast popular consultation process took place in 2018, which included the holding of 133,681 meetings in workplaces, educational institutions and community centres to debate the text of the constitution. A total of 8,945,521 people participated in the process, out of a population of just over 11 million. Some 1,706,872 comments were received, of which 783,174 were proposals relating to the draft text. On the basis of those proposals, close to 60 per cent of the text of the draft constitution was amended. By ratifying the new constitution, the Cuban people showed once again that in Cuba key decisions and consensus on issues that define the life of a nation are reached with the decisive contribution of all.

Many of the peoples of the world know very well the nobility of ideals that sustains the conduct of the Cuban people in their international activities. Several of them directly benefited from the selfless and permanent commitment of Cubans to the advancement of human rights for all, throughout the world. Tens of thousands of Cubans shared the fate of the millions of brothers and sisters in the struggles against colonialism and apartheid. Cuban aid workers currently serve in 67 countries and their dignity, professionalism and altruism have reached the most remote villages, mountains and hard-to-reach areas. Over the past 55 years, 600,000 international missions have been carried out to 164 countries, involving over 400,000 health-care workers, some of whom have undertaken this noble work on more than one occasion.

Cuba has a long record of international cooperation in the area of human rights, demonstrating through concrete actions its unequivocal willingness to engage in respectful, frank and open dialogue. The country has continued to comply with its international commitments and obligations under international human rights treaties and is a State party to 44 international human rights instruments.

Cuba has consolidated positive dialogue with the treaty bodies created under the international human rights treaties. The country has made considerable efforts to honour its reporting obligations to the treaty bodies. In 2017, Cuba defended its initial report to the Committee on Enforced Disappearances; in 2018, it submitted its combined nineteenth to twenty-first periodic reports to the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination; and in 2019, it submitted its initial report to the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. In 2020, Cuba will present its periodic reports to the Committee against Torture and the Committee on the Rights of the Child. In addition, the country is currently drafting national reports for other human rights treaty bodies, in line with its obligations in this area. Cuba takes very seriously the process of preparing such reports, given their usefulness as a platform for sharing experiences, viewpoints and lessons learned in the promotion and protection of all human rights for all. The observations and recommendations made by the human rights treaty bodies in response to the reports presented by Cuba are carefully reviewed by the relevant authorities.

In 2018, Cuba participated in the third cycle of the universal periodic review process of the Human Rights Council. During the review process, Cuba described the progress made in implementing the recommendations accepted during the second cycle and defended respect for self-determination, including the right of all peoples to choose their own political, economic, social and cultural systems and development models, as the foundation for international cooperation in the field of human rights,

in the framework of a respectful dialogue, with strict adherence to the principles of objectivity, impartiality and non-selectivity.

Cuba was one of the first countries to be visited by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, barely one year after the post was established. It has also received visits from several special procedure mandate holders. In 2017, the Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, especially women and children, and the Independent Expert on human rights and international solidarity visited Cuba. Both visits were fruitful. As part of its policy of cooperation with the human rights treaty bodies, Cuba systematically complies with requests for information from the special procedure mandate holders of the Human Rights Council.

The country also cooperates with a number of relevant humanitarian and human rights actors from around the world, both in Cuba and abroad through international cooperation missions. Hundreds of representatives of intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, including senior United Nations officials, visit Cuba every year.

Cuba has continued to make voluntary financial contributions to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, most recently in 2018.

In addition, Cuba regularly discusses human rights issues at the bilateral level as part of its relations with other States. Since 2015, Cuba has engaged in an annual dialogue on human rights issues with the European External Action Service, as part of the Political Dialogue and Cooperation Agreement between the European Union and its member States and Cuba.

With this candidature to the Human Rights Council, Cuba seeks to continue to contribute in a decisive manner to consolidating an approach based on cooperation and constructive dialogue in the work of the United Nations human rights machinery, and to prevent the Council's work from being tainted by the political manipulation that discredited and put paid to the Commission on Human Rights.

If elected to the Human Rights Council, Cuba will continue to promote its traditional initiatives on such vital issues as the right to food and the promotion of cultural rights as essential requirements for the enjoyment of all human rights. Cuba will also continue to work on the progressive development of third-generation rights, in particular of international solidarity.

Cuba is aware of the challenges it faces in the field of human rights and is convinced that no country has a perfect record in this area. Cuba is not perfect, but the country is firmly committed to building a society that is as fair as possible, with human well-being and social justice at its core.
